

FOR OWL'S HEAD PARK.

City to Acquire Property on Shore Drive, Brooklyn.

After long deliberation the city is at last to take steps toward the acquisition of the Bliss estate at Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, for a public park, to be known as Owl's Head Park. Controller Metz is highly in favor of the project, and the Mayor voted in favor of taking the property for park purposes some months ago. The city, through Corporation Counsel Delany, has given notice of its intention to apply to the Supreme Court on May 28 for the appointment of a special commission of estimate and assessment, empowered to go ahead with the details of acquiring the property. The city's course is in accord with the recommendation of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment on February 17, 1905, approved by the Mayor February 28, 1905.

Not only does Controller Metz favor the park scheme, but he would also in connection with it establish a line of ferries from the Battery to Bay Ridge avenue, running alternately with the 39th street ferryboats. One of the chief objects of such a line would be to care for all the Fort Hamilton, Bay Ridge, Bath Beach and Coney Island trucking. Other features of the Controller's plan are the improvement of the Shore Road and the leasing of the Bliss mansion now on the grounds as a restaurant, to be conducted like the Claremont on Riverside Drive.



OBSERVATION TOWER IN THE PROPOSED OWL'S HEAD PARK.

BARON ISVOLSKI.

Russia's New Foreign Minister — Cause of Lamsdorff's Retirement.

Although Count Lamsdorff is one of the most upright and conscientious of men, devoted to his sovereign, and who has been identified with Count Witte, first of all in endeavoring to avert the war with Japan, and after that in his efforts to bring about the introduction of a liberal régime, yet his retirement from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia is likely to prove of advantage to his government, for he is altogether out of touch with popular sentiment abroad, is among the least travelled of all his countrymen and has never had the advantage of any diplomatic training or experience. His successor, on the other hand, Baron Isvolski, is probably at the present moment the most able and brilliant diplomat in the service of the Czar. He is a much younger man than Count Lamsdorff, and more abreast of the times.

He won his spurs as representative of Alexander III at the Vatican, where he conducted negotiations of the most delicate character with so much adroitness as to win the good will both of his own government and of the Papacy. So small were the hopes entertained at St. Peters-

burg of the possibility of any understanding being effected with the Holy Seat that the late Czar, instead of sending a fullfledged envoy, dispatched a mere secretary of legation in the person of Isvolski, so that in the event of failure he could be more easily disavowed. But Isvolski succeeded beyond all expectations, with the result that not only were formal diplomatic relations resumed for the first time in many years between Russia and the Papacy, but that he himself was promoted to the rank of minister and accredited as such to the Holy Seat. The cardinals and prelates who constitute the court of the Pope are perhaps the shrewdest judges of diplomacy in the world. Their opinion of the representative of the Czar is therefore worthy of being placed on record. It is to the effect that no more clever plenipotentiary had ever been seen at the Vatican in modern times than Baron Isvolski.

Subsequently he was transferred to Tokio, where all his efforts were devoted to preventing Japan from declaring war upon Russia in connection with the latter's aggressive policy in Manchuria and in Corea. Even those persons at St. Petersburg who regarded an armed struggle with Japan as inevitable were grateful to him for staving off the final rupture at any rate until the completion of the Transsiberian railroad, and it was in recognition of his ser-

vice in this respect that he was transferred from Tokio to the post of Minister at Copenhagen. The latter, by reason of the close relationship existing between the reigning houses of Russia and Denmark, has always been looked upon as a mission indicating confidence and marked favor on the part of the two royal and imperial families. Moreover, it has always proved a stepping stone to speedy promotion, either to a first class embassy, as in the case of Baron Mohrenheim, or to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, as in the instance of the late Count Mouravieff, the predecessor of Count Lamsdorff.

Baron Isvolski, who has a charming wife and some pretty children, differing in this respect from the last five Ministers of Foreign Affairs at St. Petersburg, who were either bachelors or widowers, is a quiet man, with the most charming manners, inspiring belief in his sincerity. In fact, his engaging frankness disarms all suspicion and makes friends for him everywhere, while there is no trace of arrogance or pomposity in his composition. Possessed of a profound knowledge of the situation in the Far Orient, and equally well acquainted with the intricate politics of the Balkans, where he spent the earlier portion of his career, he brings to his new office an amount of diplomatic experience superior to that of any of his predecessors, with the possible exception of Prince Lobanoff, and may be depended upon to avoid the sometimes embarrassing mistakes of Count Lamsdorff.

Count Lamsdorff's position has been extremely



ONE OF THE SANDSTONE GUARDIANS OF THE PARK.

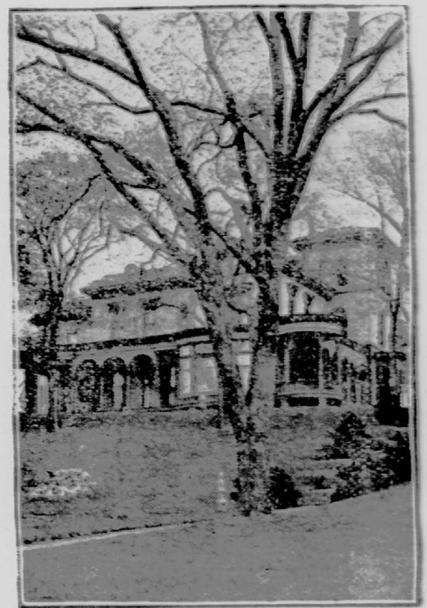
Though the Controller's scheme calls for a total expenditure of more than \$3,000,000, only about two-thirds of that amount will be needed immediately. Though the property to be taken is generally spoken of as the Bliss estate, it really includes three different estates. The Bliss estate itself comprises twenty-five acres of upland and twelve and one-half acres of land under water, with the riparian rights appertaining thereto. The executor of the estate has offered the uplands for \$750,000 and the riparian rights for \$1,000,000. The Kidney estate, including eighty-one lots, and the Tracy estate of one hundred and twenty-three lots adjoin the Bliss estate, and the whole would make one of the finest parks in the city, say those who have looked over the ground. The boundaries of the park as proposed are First avenue, the Shore Road, Wakeman Place and Bay Ridge avenue.

There is very little to be done to the Bliss estate to convert it into a park, according to advocates of the plan. Once the home of Henry C. Murphy, American Minister at The Hague from 1857 to 1861, and later the home of E. W. Bliss, the property has been particularly fortunate in being in the hands of men who took an especial pride in its appearance.

Mr. Bliss spent much money in the development of the estate, and it has the appearance of a big park. On the highest point of the upland stands a rustic stone observation tower from the summit of which a fine view of the harbor and the whole Bay Ridge region is to be had on clear days.

Near the tower stands the house, on a high ridge of ground, and on one side a broad drive sweeps up to the high porticoed main entrance. On the other side a broad lawn studded with great trees and flowering shrubs, and outlined with well kept walks, slopes away toward the shore, affording from almost any point a fine view of the bay.

One of the most noticeable features of the grounds are many little sandstone images that are to be found along the walks and in unexpected nooks amid the shrubbery. These are either in ludicrous attitudes and outlandish costumes, or wear laughable grimaces on their weather-beaten faces. They range from Beau Brummel to Dutch fishwives, and their appearance as they suddenly pop into view from behind some bush or angle in the walk lends an odd charm to the beauty of the grounds. Rustic seats are to be found here and there beneath the shade trees.



THE BLISS HOUSE IN THE PARK.

shaky for some time past, and it is only the warm affection entertained for him by Emperor Nicholas and by the two Emperesses that has delayed until now his supersession by Isvolski. True, he labored with Count Witte and General Kuropatkin to prevent the war with Japan, and was afterward identified with the latter in promoting schemes for legislative government and for the bringing about of a more liberal régime. But in the diplomatic negotiations with Japan that led up to the war he was entirely overridden, yet had to bear in silence the blame for the mistakes made by those of the Czar's advisers who insisted that the Mikado would never dare to go to war. What seems to have determined, however, his virtual removal from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs was the unfortunate publication at Paris of his telegram to Count Cassini directing him not only to side with France against Germany in the Moorish difficulty, but likewise to let every one know that all the sympathies of Russia were with her ally, France, in the matter.

Now, the Kaiser had throughout the war between Japan and Russia accorded to the latter an amount of moral and even material support verging almost upon a breach of neutrality. In fact, he showed himself to be Russia's best, and wellnigh her only, friend in that, to her, so disastrous conflict. And the tribute paid by President Roosevelt to Emperor William at the time of the Peace of Portsmouth gave an indication of all the Kaiser had done to secure from Japan favorable terms for the Czar. William had, therefore, every reason to expect that Russia would either support Germany at the Congress of Algeciras, or at any rate maintain an attitude of absolute neutrality, which was all the more easy in view of the fact that she had no material interests of her own in Morocco. Not only, however, was William disappointed in these expectations, but he was confronted by the apparently intentional publication at Paris of Count Lamsdorff's telegram to Count Cassini, which was almost a manifesto against Germany, intimating that in the event of a conflict Russia would be found on the side of France and of England, the latter being the ally of Japan. Of course, there was intense indignation at Berlin, and indeed throughout the length and breadth of Germany, which immediately proceeded to close her money markets to the new Russian loan, thereby subjecting Russia to an immense amount of inconvenience and expense. What passed between Emperor Nicholas and Kaiser William about the affair can only be conjectured. But it may safely be assumed that the Czar explained that Count Lamsdorff had acted without his approval or



ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL WALKS IN THE PROPOSED OWL'S HEAD PARK.